Scientology Raid Yielded Alleged Burglary Tools

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FBI agents who searched the Los Angeles headquarters of the Church of Scientology last Friday recovered electronic eavesdropping equipment and items described by the agents as "burglary tools" from a safe there, according to several sources familiar with the search.

The items were among those listed in a 459-page inventory of the search prepared by the FBI, the sources said. The agents reportedly confiscated as many as 200,000 documents in the search, so many that it took a truck to haul the materials away.

A church spokesman in Los Angeles, the Rev. Vaughan Young, said he could not comment on the alleged results of the search on the advice of the church's attorneys. Instead, he released a statement similar to others issued by church spokesmen since the raid, questioning the FBI's motives in the search, and saying it was an illegal seizure of church property.

Also found in the Los Angeles search were copies of documents reportedly stolen from federal offices in Washington, according to the inventory.

Agents raided the church's headquarters in Los Angeles and offices in Washington largely on the basis of information from a former church official, who claimed the church's hierarchy had masterminded a plot to infiltrate government agencies, steal and copy government files, and bug government meetings.

The former official, Michael Meisner, reportedly told agents before the search that he was personally aware of incidents in which the church allegedly bugged government meetings.

One such alleged bugging occurred in the Internal Revenue Service headquarters here on Nov. 1, 1974, according to Meisner's account.

On that date, Meisner told federal officials, two scientologists "surreptitiously entered the IRS building and placed a listening device in a conference room, which they knew was about to be used for a high-level IRS meeting on the Church of Scientology."

The meeting, which IRS files show then took place as scheduled, included representatives from various sections of the IRS who were interested in the church's financial activities.

Meisner said one of the scientologists who allegedly bugged the meeting later told him what had occurred there, and that he had also seen at the Los Angeles headquarters of the church a transcript of the secretly produced tape of the session.

There was no indication that such a transcript was recovered in the Los Angeles search.

Meisner, who has been placed in protective custoy of U. S. marshals, told agents he had been held under "house arrest" by the scientologists when they believed he was going to go to the federal government with his information about the church.

Meisner reportedly asked for the protection because of what has been described as the church's "fair game" doctrine, which reportedly requires the church to attack and destroy its enemies, "suppressive persons," and persons who leave the church.

The bugging incident involving the IRS was only one of allegedly numerous successful attempts in which covert agents for the church stole government files and infiltrated agencies, according to court records. Other agencies allegedly targeted by the church included the Justice Department, the U.S. Attorney's Office here, and the Drug Enforcement Administration, the court records indicate.

In his statement yesterday, church spokesman Young characterized the raid as "part of a consistent campaign of harassment" against the church by federal government agencies.

The federal government began amassing materials on the church soon after it was founded in the early 1950s, and has been involved in lengthy litigation on various aspects of the church's activities. It has questioned the church's claims concerning lie-detector-like "E-meters" used in the church's religious counseling, and also the church's tax-exempt status as a religion.